BOOKS OF THE WEEK SEEN IN REVIEW AND COMMENT

CRITICAL REVIEWS OF THE SEASON'S LATEST BOOKS

Robert Grant's Story of a High Priestess of This Reforming Day—A Rural Hero's Flirtation.

A Romance of Air Machines From the Williamsons—Other Fiction on Various Themes.

Adventurous and Amusing Reading for the Young – Foreign Lands, Art and Other Subjects.

The character indicated in the title of Robert Grant's story of "The High Priestess" (Charles Scribner's Sons) is Mary Arnold, who married Oliver Randall. Marriage should be a suitable mating, and doubtless Mary was justified in dwelling with some satisfaction upon the point that Oliver's "stalwart and commanding physique comported so admirably with her own tall and well proportioned figure." All indeed may seem well and in cases may be well, but it is none the less true that the aspirations and the determined doings of "the essentially modern woman" of our day may banish happiness from the domestic hearth—may play the mischief with the home.

The trouble in the case so quietly and skilfully illuminated in this story was due quite obviously, though only secondarily, to Sybil. "Are you ready for another cup of tea?" The question was Sybil's. She was attending to Oliver while Mary was away responding to those higher calls that the essentially modern woman hears. The domestic spirit was lodged in Sybil—at least on occasion. She could be old fashioned in that particular. Her simple question fell upon unaccustomed ears. Its effect stole slowly on the apprehension of the listener. "Oliver found himself hesitating. He was not accustomed to take tea. Such a thing was never suggested by Mary. Glancing down he saw that though he had finished his tea there was still food in his plate which he would have eaten but for the conversation. 'Why, thank you, I don't mind if I do.' As she supplied him with a second cup Oliver reflected that this side of her was new to him. What had called it forth? If only Mary were there to listen. But Mary must be aware of it. Sybil was certainly more of a person, more wide awake and observing, than he had given her credit for. In her own modest, retiring way, to be sure." She had been conversing brightly while watchfully attending to the matters of the table. Oliver's reflection had reference to her conversational abilities. But Mary also conversed brightly. The second cup of tea was the insidious thing. It had glamour. We think it extremely likely that in Oliver's surprised apprehension it was finer than Mary's advocacy of the teaching of sex hygiene in the schools.

The trouble that we here see in its beginning reached a climax when Mary returned home unexpectedly from one of her public excursions. Mary hated to be an eavesdropper, but hearing her husband and Sybil conversing in the parlor she stole on tiptoe through the hall and surprised them just as Oliver had kissed Sybil. She heard Sybil taking the blame for what had happened: "It's my fault—it's my fault, Ollie. I should have realized this might happen. It's madness for us both, as I've just told you, for neither of us is free." Sybil was not free because she was engaged to Henry Ives Thornton. Henry was not disturbed by this awkward occurence; he readily overlooked it, supposing that he knew anything about it, and he and Sybil were married a fortnight later. But Mary left her husband, and it was only at the end of several years and after Oliver had been elected Governor of the State that she became reconciled to him.

The story has a gentle and agreeable flow, meandering in convolutions that have both an educational and a pleasant interest. It is fully informed, through the concerns of its characters, with the inquisitive and boldly tentative spirit of this unusual time. The novelist appears to be smiling a little as he smoothly and lightly proceeds. If he deals correction it is with a velvet hand. There is satisfaction in Mary's understanding and avowal at the last, as she nestles reconciled against her husband's heart, that she is a woman after all.

SOME NEW FICTION.

Slowly and deliberately in "Sprague's Canyon" (George H. Doran Company) Horace Annesley Vachell describes the flirtation of a young minx from the city with a self-satisfied country boy. The youth, in spite of the author's admiration for him, his honesty and the virtues of primitive people, retains his uncouth manners throughout, which may make it difficult for many readers to feel sympathy for him. He has the peasant's passion for the soil he cultivates and a rather un-American reluctance to learn anything of the world outside his ranch. The girl is an amusing study of a common, shallow American type, and the shattering of all her efforts to make over her stubborn lover is good comedy. The sagacious mother and the loquacious old stage driver are picturesque, while the silent country girl who consoles the hero is satisfactory if conventional; the other people who put in an appearance do not amount to much. The author has expended much literary skill on a pretty meagre plot; he will hardly rouse enthusiasm for a wholly rural life, no matter how beautiful the scenery may be.

Life in a country boys' school is what Gerald Chittenden starts to describe in "The Anvil of Chance" (Longmans, Green and Company) and, amiable though his undecided hero is, we grow impatient over his hesitations and conscientious qualms about the treatment of boys, his fitness to be a schoolmaster, his society duties and his small misadventures. Luckily he talks himself into taking a trip into uncivilized regions, where he encounters people who do things instead of ruminating over them; he is marooned in a wretched Central American town during a yellow fever epidemic and does his duty like a man as he sees others doing theirs. The result is highly beneficial to himself and to the school when he gets back. It is a pleasant and well written story, the vigor of the latter portion redeeming the amiable dawdling of the beginning.

A brisk specimen of the conventional lumbering yarn is spun by Henry Oyen in "The Man Trail" (George H. Doran Company). The necessary quarrel between the muscular hero and his father is gotten over quickly and with no discredit to the young man. He starts in to work for a crabbed relative, who puts obstacles in his way to try him; these he overcomes partly by strength and partly by his faculty of making friends with all conditions of men. The obligatory young woman is also present, but the author judiciously makes the hero work out his own salvation. He learns the lumber business with remarkable speed, is then put in charge of a camp, which he is obliged to defend against many enemies. We are favored with many hand to hand fights and with the foiling of much villainy. An excellent tale of its kind.

Though air machines and automobiles are employed freely in "Secret History" by C. N. and A. M. Williamson (Doubleday, Page and Company), and though the scene changes frequently, it is with the troubles of the vivacious young narrator that the story concerns itself. She is very young at the beginning and keeps just as young in her judgments in spite of the passing of years. She falls in love with an aviator in the exuberant manner of the early teens and sees him pass through sordid trials. These are due largely to her beautiful but preternaturally selfish sister, who appropriates the man, follows him from England to the Mexican border and then jilts him for a richer man. The latter by a complicated and very improbable piece of treachery has the hero dismissed from the army. The present war gives him the chance to rehabilitate himself with his aeroplane and the heroine the opportunity to show her pluck and to find out that he loves her. The depiction of the child's qualities, good and bad, is clever, but there is an inordinate amount of meanness that she must contend against.

The somewhat cumbersome device is employed by Mrs. George de Horne Vaizey, to connect her short stories in "What Man Wills" (G. P. Putnam's Sons), of making a house party at Christmas explain what the real ambition of each is. The stories show how each attained his or her object; some are humorous, and these are the best; some are tragic. The ending is even more artificial than the beginning. The stories are pleasant to read; their quality is that of the average American magazine story.

Wherever his disreputable hero appears in Pierre Mille's "Barnavaux" (John Lane Company) the stories are capital, and the satire is blended with humor. Most of the tales have nothing to do with the Gallic Mulvany, however, and are pretty grim and horrible. The first story is pretty long; It describes the life of white men in Madagascar with some semblance of an effort to enter into a Pierre Loti mood. We should be sorry to have the author follow other literary models, for he can certainly tell a story well in his own way. The colored illustrations by Helen McKie are fully as French and as brilliant as Barnavaux himself.

Though the hero indulges in much theatrical rhetoric in a pompous vocabulary in Arthur A. Nelson's "Wings of Danger" (G. P. Putnam's Sons) the story opens promisingly with its mining ventures in the Transvaal and the chances for expeditions into the African wilds. Many of the characters have individuality. Unfortunately a sort of Rider Haggard obsession takes hold of the author; with the aid of two rapid fire guns and an apparently inexhaustible supply of ammunition, he sheds blood lavishly, he discovers a race of lost Vikings in the heart of the continent only to slaughter them, and when the guns are insufficient he turns on a volcano. By that time all interest in the people with whom he started naturally becomes weak.

In "The Island of Surprise" (A. C McClurg and Company) Cyrus Townsend Brady takes a good deal of trouble to get a young man and two young women into a Robinson Crusoe situation. A knock on the head impairs the youth's memory, he forgets that he has married one in haste and has made love to the other. The young women, however, have not forgotten and neither intends to yield to the other. They have the same Christian name, which helps to bewilder the youth and does not add to the grace of the narrative. With Mr. Brady a solution like bigamy is not to be expected, though it seems to occur to the youth, whom the author uses as a sort of dummy. The girls are left to contend in words and in actions till another knock on the head restores the young man's senses. All three seem deficient in elementary morality.

In "Happy Hollow Farm" (George H. Doran Company) William R. Lighton takes a whole volume to boast of his success in farming and of his superiority to his neighbors and, we should say, to nearly every one else who has farmed. With his leaving a newspaper job in Kansas to pick out a farm in Arkansas all can sympathize, though the locality may be surprising. It is a pretty general craving, which helps on the "back to the land" enthusiasts. But beyond a few general statements such as the manner of ploughing, the use he made of sorghum and cow peas and some other such matters and a great deal of criticism of labor, of shiftless ways and of what errors others committed there is no information in his prolix exhortations that can help others who may try to imitate him. He enumerates many improvements he made, but does not tell how he made them. And he takes a page or two of volubility, patting himself on the back all the time, to reach the simplest statement of fact.

Perhaps the best known, as it is the prettiest of George Sand's shorter tales, "La Petite Fadette," with which an older generation identified Maggie Mitchell as "Fanchon the Cricket," has had a new lease of popularity through the moving pictures and Mary Pickford's fitting into the part. The story is published in the translation of Jane Minot Sedgwick, with illustrations from the photoplay, by Duffield and Company.

There is little literary quality to be lost in turning a play by Earl Derr Biggers into a story or vice versa, and Robert Welles Ritchie has performed the task very well with "Inside the Lines" (The Bobbs-Merrill Company), which many who have seen the play will like to read. The illustrations are from scenes in the play.

FOR GIRLS AND BOYS.

The outdoor performances of a lot of lively young women are recounted by Margaret Widdemer in "Winona of the Camp Fire" (J. B. Lippincott Company). It involves to a certain extent the actions of their boy scout friends, for the author favors both movements. Young girls will enjoy the story. In "Lotta Embury's Career," by Ella W. Peattie (Houghton Mifflin Company), a young woman who starts in to be a musician has the good sense to turn to a business training when she is assured that she has no talent. She is successful and is able to aid her parents. There is much morbid sentiment contrasted with her hard sense which might have been omitted in a book for the young. In "A Real Cinderella" (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company), by Nina Rhoades, on the contrary, a small girl's musical talent excuses much. She struggles through a rather complex case of conscience and we suspect that the book marks the beginning of a new series.

Of heroines of established series "Dorothy Dainty at Crestville" (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company) is allowed to gratify her admirers for the thirteenth time with her pleasant adventures. Lazelle T. Wooley's older heroine is kept busy in "Faith Palmer at Washington" (The Penn Publishing Company) so as to allow of rather confused impressions of the capital. In "A Little Maid of Narragansett Bay" (The Penn Publishing Company) Alice Turner Curtis continues her historical pictures with one of Rhode Island in Revolution times; her heroine in spite of changes in period and place and name remaining much the same girl.

History predominates in the books written for boys. No more excitement can be asked for than E. Alexander Powell provides in "The Road to Glory" (Charles Scribner's Sons), the stories of American adventurers, now forgotten or nearly forgotten, who fought bravely and recklessly on the sea and on the doubtful borders, Florida, Texas, Mexico, Oregon. The fact that these stories are substantially true adds to their interest. The modern improvements in Indian tales are to be found in Elmer Russell Gregor's "The Red Arrow" (Harpers), of which two Indian boys are the heroes. Through them the author describes the real Indian as the ethnologists know him. The older type of Indian story is represented by Paul G. Tomlinson's "The Trail of Black Hawk" (Appletons), the white boys sharing in the vicissitudes of the last Indian uprising east of the Mississippi. The author has taken pains to present the facts accurately. A story of which boys never grow weary is told again by Edwin L. Sabin in "Gold Seekers of '49" (J. B. Lippincott Company). Here too accuracy in the history of the pioneers is sought, while the youthful heroes gain their experience. The tales of the present war deviate from the common pattern; in "Under Fire for Servia" (The Saalfield Publishing Company) Col. James Fiske enters on a neglected field of operations, while J. S. Zerbe in "Trench Mates in France" (Harpers), dealing with young French boys, gives interesting information about what is done in warfare and illustrates it with diagrams and pictures.

Further interesting and amusing adventures of the boys that Charles P. Burton has put through the boy scout mill are told in "Camp Bob's Hill" (Henry Holt and Company), the company now camping out. The tale of a youth's hunt for a malefactor which brings about the development of his character and his acquaintance with people of many kinds is told by W. T. Nichols in "Making Good" (Appletons). There is some football besides. An amiable but physically weak youth provides fun in J. Raymond Elderdice's "T. Haviland Hicks, Freshman" (Appletons) by his plucky bungling in all athletic matters. It is an amusing tale that will probably be followed by others.

MANY LANDS.

The "Memories of India" by Gen. Sir Robert Baden-Powell, K. C. B., who is the originator of the boy scouts (David McKay, Philadelphia), is a purely personal and wholly delightful volume. It is made up from diaries and letters of the author's youth and from admirable sketches and less successful water colors that he made at the time. There is a good deal about sport in the story and something about military training, but the interest is chiefly personal and the reader will love the spirited, good humored, outspoken youngster who figures in it. The book accounts for the author's success in the movements he advocated, for it unconsciously shows his sincerity and his whole hearted devotion to what he undertook. A certain amount of travel interest attaches to his adventures in Kashmir, but the charm of the book, what makes it worth reading, is the picture it offers of young Baden-Powell.

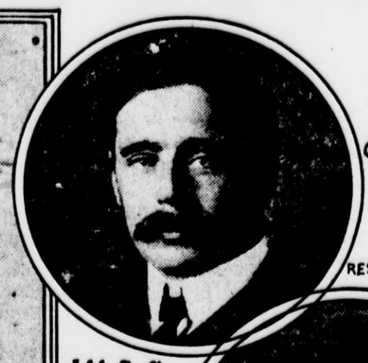
A book of real importance, recording the exploration of an unknown region that must soon be better known on account of its commercial value and the geographical problems it holds, is Thomas Whiffen's "The Northwest Amazons" (Duffield and Company). The author's interest is chiefly in anthropology and archaeology, sciences with which he needs perhaps a more thorough acquaintance, but what he did was to examine carefully, with a courage and a patience that he takes for granted, a dangerous and unhealthy region of tropical forests, swamps, rubber and cannibals. Money and life have been expended lavishly on the Madera railroad and the region roundabout, which in the long run must open the upper Amazon to civilization. Mr. Wiffen tells us something of what there is in the region beyond, aside from his investigation of the strange tribes that inhabit the forests and their customs. The photographs are very interesting, though sometimes on too minute a scale to show what they mean, and the maps are adequate. It is a book that must be consulted by all who are interested in the development of Brazil.

A sort of statistical survey of Latin America, which includes the West Indies and Central America, is offered by Roger W. Babson in "The Future of South America" (Little, Brown and Company). It is in a way a commercial guide book. The author takes up the islands and the countries, one by one, tells what they produce and can produce, estimates what the United States can get out of them and makes a rational guess at what the future of each is likely to be. It is a pretty rigid examination of facts and leaves out the emotional and psychological factors which are likely to have more influence on the South American mind.

Following on his Parisian student life experiences, Julius M. Price writes about "My Bohemian Days in London" (David McKay). It is an entertaining book, not that the author has anything of importance to say, but because he tells with boyish candor and with absolutely no sense of conventional propriety, the story of the beginning of his artistic career. He has a good deal to say about artists' models and other people who are regarded as "bohemian," about queer places in London, and about some noted persons that he happened to meet. He illustrates his book with his own sketches and reproductions of his pictures. It is not a very wise book, but it is often amusing, and the author's ingenuous frankness gives an attractive freshness to his narrative.

A rather intimate account of an important region in Africa, the mining region around Katanga, in the Belgian Congo, and British and Portuguese South Africa, has been written by J. B. Thornhill in "Adventures in Africa" (E. P. Dutton and Company). Allowance must be made for the writer's resentment at the forces that stood in his way, which leads him to abuse the British authorities as well as the foreign officials and administrations. He is thoroughly British, an adventurer who wishes to do things and cannot understand why he should be opposed, particularly by foreigners. He offers a picture of British activity behind the scenes in Africa which might well arouse resentment on the part of Germans and others.

MISS WILLA S. CATHER
AUTHOR OF
"THE SONG OF THE LARK"
(HOUGHTON MIFFLIN)



H. G. WELLS
AUTHOR OF
RESEARCH MAGNIFICENT"
(MACMILLAN)

ANTHONY HOPE
AUTHOR OF
"A YOUNG MAN'S YEAR"
(APPLETON)

KATHARINE TYNAN
AUTHOR OF
"THE CURSE OF CASTLE EAGLE"
(DUFFIELD)

RUTH'S ADVENTURES AT HOME AND ABROAD

Ruth Holworthy, member of an old Massachusetts family and heroine of Gordon Arthur Smith's story of "The Crown of Life" (Charles Scribner's Sons), was rude at times. To the rector of the Episcopal Church in East Westly, who had been called in to admonish her, she said pertly: "How do you do, Mr. Weeks? How are your worthy poor?" It was impossible for Mr. Weeks, who was not a strong character, to admonish at all effectively a young person of Ruth's assurance.

In Boston she was rude to Jerome Defoe, assistant professor of the Romance languages at Harvard. It must be said that Jerome himself was a little supercilious, but he was 33 years old and Ruth was hardly 18. To be sure she was a girl of some accomplishments. "Once she had argued brilliantly with a professor of Greek on the morality of Euripides—much to the astonishment of the professor and not a little to his uneasiness. She could quote fragments of Verlaine and Baudelaire; she had her opinion of Maeterlinck, of Shaw, of Strindberg, of Ibsen." Perhaps it was unwarranted as well as unwise for the assistant professor to speak as he did to such a girl, but certainly he did say to her that he thought it a pity she had not been more soundly spanked, whereupon and just as certainly she said to him that what he was talking about was none of his business.

In France Ruth had the dickens of an experience with Rene Dartex, the great dramatist. This remarkable man had fought fourteen duels, and it was when he was fighting one of them that the shots frightened Ruth's horse, with the result that she was kicked in the shoulder by the irresponsible animal and rather severely injured. If we were a girl we are sure that we could easily refrain from falling in love with Dartex, but Ruth was of another inclination, and the story tells brightly just what befell until the fortunate time when fate, with the help of the assistant professor, permitted her to return to the safe environment of her home in East Westly.

We could not help liking the story, though we are sure the assistant professor was sound regarding the insufficient soundness of a certain early correction.